Malachi 1 – “I Have Loved You,” says the Lord

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Open your Bible to the last book of the Old Testament, and we're going to talk a little bit about Malachi before we get into the text, and I think we'll probably just get through chapter one tonight because there are some things to address as we get into this chapter. But what I want to begin by doing here tonight is to kind of put a list of things up on the screen that are some guidelines for what we're going to be seeing and what you need to know about this book.

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- **Malachi lived approximately 80 to 100 years after Zechariah.**
- **Malachi is the last of the “Minor Prophets”.**
- **Malachi is God’s final word to Israel and ushers in a period of silence that lasted 400 years until John the Baptist.**
- **Malachi’s name means “my messenger”.**
- **Malachi predicted the coming of both John the Baptist and Messiah.**
- **Malachi is quoted by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans.**
- **Malachi writes to a backslidden people for whom the life of faith and worship had become half hearted.**

Such as, Malachi lived approximately 80 to 100 years after Zechariah (**refer to slide**), which that's the book we just finished, so that gives you a sense of the timeframe. As I said, Malachi is the last of the minor prophets (**refer to slide**), and interestingly enough this prophecy is the final word. This is the last word to Israel, before John the Baptist comes on the scene. We call what we refer to this time period as, between the Old and New Testaments, the Intertestamental Period and it was a period of 400 years (**refer to slide**).

And it's interesting in Isaiah when it talks prophetically about the coming of Messiah, it says **Isaiah 53:2-11 ESV (paraphrased)** *“...as a root out of dry*

ground...". It begins to then speak of how God brought forth this Messiah. Well, that's the dry ground, he's talking about, 400 years of prophetic silence from the Lord. So, this is, we're going to pay attention to what the Lord has to say. I don't know, if you were told you've got one last thing to say to someone that you loved, you'd probably guard your words and pick them carefully.

The name of Malachi means "my messenger" (**refer to slide**), and we're going to see throughout the course of this study that Malachi speaks prophetically of both the coming of John the Baptist and the coming of Messiah (**refer to slide**). He is quoted by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans (**refer to slide**). We will actually look at that tonight, and Malachi's letter is primarily written to backslidden people for whom the life of faith and worship had become rather perfunctory, half-hearted **(refer to slide**). It became a duty. It became a religious duty. And they were doing things out of religious obligation and duty, and they'd lost their love for the Lord.

And so, the Lord is going to do something that probably most of us feel very uneasy about, and that is confrontation. I don't know how you feel about confrontation. Most people would rather have a root canal than confront someone, you know, in their error and say,

"Hey, what are you doing that's wrong?" or something like that.

There are other people that just don't…they don't mind confrontation. Well, the Lord is going to confront the people of Israel through Malachi. And He's going to do it in the form of several indictments or charges against them and their attitude, their lackadaisical kind of casual approach that they'd begun to take regarding the things of the Lord, their behavior, and so forth.

And that is going to cause the people to follow up those charges with a question of their own. So the people are going to ask questions in response to the charges the Lord gives. In fact, they're going to ask no fewer than eight questions over the course of this fairly short book. And then the Lord is going to give further clarification about the charge or the indictment that He brings against them.

So, that is just kind of a short introduction to the book of Malachi. Let's get into it. It begins in chapter one, verse one by saying, "[1]*The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi.*" And I want to stop you there just a moment, again, I want you to notice that Malachi addresses from the Lord this message to Israel.

Now you might remember, this is after the Northern Kingdom of Israel is long since been conquered by the Assyrians. In fact, this is long since, then from

Judah being conquered by the Babylonian Empire. And because Israel, the Northern Kingdom of Israel, was assimilated into the Gentile nations. It has led to the belief that there are ten lost tribes.

I was reading, I was doing a little research in my study for this today, and I was going through and found some questions and I, again, saw people talking about the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, and we've addressed this in the past. There's nothing lost. God doesn't lose anything.

And during the course of the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom, during the times of the kings. The people from the northern ten tribes migrated down into the Southern Kingdom. Many of them gave up their homeland and they took up residents in the Southern Kingdom where there was still a godly remnant. And so therefore, when the Nation of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, Judah was conquered by Babylon, and those people were taken into exile, and then seventy years later returned, there were people represented from all the Tribes of Israel. So God is still able to address them as Israel. This is the Nation of Israel.

There are many other passages that address the Tribes of Israel post-exile. So anyway, yeah, I just want to make that point. Very important point. So there's nothing lost.

Verse two goes on to say, "**2***I have loved you, says the Lord", but you say, "How have you loved us?"* (There's that indictment or first statement rather. And then, question, how have you loved us? And then the Lord goes on to say,) "*Is not Esau Jacob's brother?"*(Yes, they were twins. We know that. The sons of Isaac.) *declares the Lord*. "*Yet I have loved Jacob* **3***but Esau I have hated. I've laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert."*

Now I want you to stop there for a moment. We're going to take a little time with this. Because this is, He starts off with a pretty amazing statement to the people of Israel in this final prophetic book. And it begins with words that many people long to hear from the Lord. And that is, "**2***I have loved you*".

I remember when the Lord told me that He loved me. We, if you ask people,

"Does the Lord love you?"

Most of us who spend any time in the Word of God and know what the scriptures say, we would say,

"Well, yeah, God loves me."

And I would've too, and I was a fairly young man, I was in my twenties at the time, but someone came along and actually gave me a word from the Lord. It was a very simple word from the Lord. Somebody came up to me, and it was at church. It was at a church we were attending at the time, and I wasn't a pastor, but somebody just came up to me and said,

"The Lord just wants you to know something."

And I said, "What's that?"

He says, "He loves you."

I bawled like a baby. I literally just burst into tears. Again, if you would've asked me prior to that, "Do you think the Lord loves you?" I would have just said, "Well, yeah, of course." But when the Lord said it, there's something about when the Lord says it. It means so much, and He's saying it to Israel. I have loved you. I have loved you.

Well, it's interesting. This is probably one of the most lovely statements that God could have said to Israel, and this whole passage here is intended to be an assurance to the people of Israel. *"[2]I have loved you…"* He starts out saying, and yet I find it very interesting that modern audiences find this passage to be one of the most troubling passages in the Bible.

Isn't that interesting? And yet, despite the fact that the statement was intended by God to be one of assurance for the people of Israel, modern audiences just struggle with this statement. And it's particularly that statement where He says, *"[3]but Esau, I have hated..."* And it is admittedly strong language, strong wording that we find here. *"...I have loved Jacob, [3]but Esau I have hated.*"

And the reason that people struggle, I mean, they skip right past the assurance that God was giving to the Nation of Israel, and they camp on the one negative statement in the passage. But the reason people struggle with this statement is because it causes them to question whether or not God might hate them.

And some of this, I think, is probably going to resonate with some of you. And others of you who don't struggle with the idea of whether or not God hates you you're kind of left to say, "Really? People worry about that?" Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Very much.

When you read this passage and make kind of a cursory reading of it. It can sound on the outside of things that God simply chooses, on a whim, those who

He's going to like, and those who He is going to hate. Kind of in a childish sort of a way, the way we pick our friends, I like you, but I hate him, sort of a thing. And it looks on the outside, like if God chooses who He's going to hate and who He's going to like, then you really don't have any say in the matter.

It's just going to be what it's going to be. And a lot of people wonder if they're in God's hate category. That's the way they read this passage. Those are the questions that come from reading this passage. And again, some of you are thinking to yourself,

“Why in the world would people ever wonder why God might hate them? Aren't they convinced of God's love and mercy?”

And the answer to that question is, “No, not everyone”.

And I'm talking about believers. I'm talking about believers. Not every believer is convinced of God's love. And so that's an important thing to know. And as I talk with believers, and I've talked to many over the years, who struggle with this very issue. I find that there are two main reasons why people doubt God's love and His mercy and I'm going to put them up on the screen for you and you'll see the first one as I do.

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Reasons people doubt God’s love and mercy

- **They are fixated on their past sins.**

And the first one is that they're fixated on their past sins. There is a very effective trap of the enemy, and it is to get a person to get locked in a cycle of self-examination where they play and replay their past failures and mistakes. And people can I tell you, in all honesty, it is just another form of self-absorption.

I'm sorry if that offends you, but it's the reality, and the people who get caught in this cycle find themselves in a living hell that torments them day and night. And I have met many people who are living in exactly those kind of circumstances. And let me tell you this, it is exactly where the enemy wants you, precisely where the enemy wants you.

Because he knows that if he can get you there, you will be in prison and you will be in a constant state of paralysis. You will not share your faith. You will hardly pick up your Bible, at times, because it's too fearful for you to do that.

You run into passages that become this reaffirmation of the scumbag that you've become, convinced that you are in God's sight, and who wants to sit and remind themselves of that? I mean, I sure wouldn't. So I get constant emails and letters and calls from people saying,

“Pastor, I'm stuck. What's the answer? What do I do?”

Well, I want to share with you what I often share with those people, but it's kind of a two-pronged answer, okay. For those of you who might be dealing with this or know someone who is, you might want to take notes on this. But the first thing I tell people is that,

“Through the Holy Spirit you must overcome the constant temptation to fixate on yourself and your past failures.”

And I want you to notice, take very special note of the fact that I said,

“Through the Spirit of God” you must do this.

I'm not telling you to do it in your own power. You can't do it in your own power. In fact, that's one of the key elements of getting free from this cycle is, you will try your best effort to set yourselves free, and you will not succeed because you can't battle the flesh with the flesh. You just can't do that. I've told you many times it's like throwing a match on a burning pile.

The flesh will not conquer the flesh. Only through the Spirit can we conquer the flesh. And it is the flesh that needs to be conquered. Make no mistake about it, the flesh has asserted itself to a place of dominance. When we begin to self-examine and we become self-absorbed by our failures and sins, that is the carnal nature, that is literally taken over. And we've become addicted, very much, to these self-directed thoughts and it's an addiction like any other addiction. Like alcoholism or drug addiction or porn addiction or anything, self-absorption is no less an addiction than any other addiction, and it is a root cause.

And please understand Christians that yes, Satan has you in a cycle, but you provided him with the groundwork to put you in that cycle, okay. People talk all the time about how Satan's attacking. Listen, Satan only attacks because he's got something to attack. Do you remember what Jesus said at the Last Supper?

He said, (**John 14:30 NIV**) "*30…the prince of this world is coming, but he has no hold on me,*". Why did Jesus say that? There was nothing for Satan to attack in His nature, He had no sinful nature. You and I have a sinful nature. We give him plenty of fodder to attack us with, plenty, myself included. So understand that even though the enemy is attacking, there's some element of your own personal responsibility, and through the power of the Spirit, even though it's your issue, God wants to give you the power of the Spirit to overcome your temptation, or rather, your giving into the temptation to fixate, because you see, that's what happens once we have that propensity to fixate on self.

Then the enemy just comes along and he tempts you to keep doing it and you fault to that temptation. And you keep doing it, and you keep doing it, and you keep doing it, and you keep doing it. And pretty soon you're in an addiction sort of a cycle because now it's just a knee-jerk reaction. So the first thing is to, you know, trust in the power of the Spirit. But secondly, the thing I tell people is they must learn to exercise faith over feelings. Because you see people who are in this self-made prison have listened to their feelings for so long, and they have responded to their feelings for so long. It has become the dominant voice in their life above the Lord.

And see, I'll tell people who are in this cycle of addiction, I'll say, "Well, here's what God's Word says", but it gets drowned out, you see, by the voice of self. And you understand even as a Christian, that is possible for that to happen to you. For the voice of self to drown out the voice of the Lord.

And what is needful is for the person to turn away from the voice of their deceptive heart, and that we come back to **Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV)** "*9The heart is deceitful...*". That means it lies to you. If you had a friend who was deceitful, you'd be very careful listening to what they say. Because you would know after a period of time, oh I can't trust what they say.

Well, that's what God says about your heart. And yet we don't look at our heart like a deceitful friend. We look at it like a confidant. In whom we put trust. That's what…and so we listen to our heart, and that's how we fall. That's how the enemy gets us, rather than heeding the word of God and saying,

"You know what? My heart is a big fat liar, and I'm not going to believe, I'm not going to believe what it says."

I know that my heart can generate in me all these feelings, but it's a lie. It is a lie. Because it contradicts the Word of God. That's how I know it's a lie, by the way, it contradicts God's Word.

And so you know, that's what needs to be done. But the other reason people doubt God's love and mercy is because they've been exposed to an imbalanced teaching and understanding about predestination.

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Reasons people doubt God's love and mercy

- **The are fixated on their past sins.**
- **They misunderstand predestination.**

And that's the second on this list, and the reason I bring this up, bring up the issue of predestination, which by the way is a biblical term, and I'll explain that. It is a very biblical term, but people misunderstand it. And the reason I'm bringing it up is because Paul the Apostle quotes this very passage from Malachi in his teaching about predestination, alright. And in that teaching of predestination or what we call election, or what the Bible calls election, there is a tremendous amount of misunderstanding.

I want to show you what Paul writes, first of all, from Romans chapter 9. Up on the screen it says:

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Romans 9:10-13 (ESV) *"[10]…when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, [11]though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad –in order that God's purpose of election (*there's the word right there*) might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls –[12]she was told, (*and this is something God told Rebekah, the Lord said*) The older will serve the younger. [13]As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated".*"

So he reminds us the fact that the Lord told Rebekah, when they inquired of the Lord, remember she was…there was all this activity going on in her womb. "What is going on?"

And the Lord said, "Well, the older is going to serve the…"

Well, that's not the way things work in the ancient world. The older does not serve the younger. The younger serves the older. In the ancient world, the first-born son received the double portion from his father. And he received that, he was the heir of all that his father owned. And in that way, he became the hierarchical leader that when his father died, and the younger served him, that's

the way it worked. But in the case of Jacob and Esau, Esau was born first and yet God said Esau is going to serve Jacob, even though he was older.

God communicated that and He then reminds Israel here in Malachi of this very same election by saying, **Romans 9:10-13 (ESV)** "*[13]…Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.*" Very strong language, but the word hated here should not be interpreted as, like I was saying, a petty childlike dislike. Where I simply say on a whim,

"I don't like you. I like him, but I don't like you."

That's not what's going on here. I've had many people over the years ask me,

"How can I know that God doesn't hate me?"

Because they've heard this teaching of predestination and they have come to believe that God chooses who He's going to like, in other words, who's going to be saved. And who He hates, and who isn't going to be saved. And you can't do anything about it, you're just, you're one way or the other. You're chosen one way or the other, and there's nothing you can do. So, you might be sitting here in church today and get all the way through your life, and you get to heaven and God says,

"Oh, sorry, you're on the hate list. I guess I didn't tell you, but and I mean, there's really no way for you to know, but sorry."

A lot of people live their lives that way and it's a tragedy. It really is a tragedy.

As I said, it's a misunderstanding predicated on a lack of insight into what Paul the Apostle is talking about. Because he explains in Romans chapter 8, how God chooses and why. Look at **Romans 8:29-30 (ESV)** on the screen it says,

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Romans 8:29-30 (ESV)
"[29]For those whom [God] foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30]And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

Now I want you to look at that passage on the screen very carefully because the first five words are critical. "*[29]For those whom he foreknew…*". What does that mean when we say God foreknew? Well, it means that God has foreknowledge

and the fact that God has foreknowledge means that He doesn't have to wait to find things out, like you and I have to wait.

I have to wait to see how things are going to turn out. God doesn't have to wait because He's not bound by time. Do you know when I say this, when I say that from the pulpit that

"God is not bound by time".

I get notes almost every time I do from people saying,

"That doesn't make any sense to me, pastor."

because they can't conceive of an idea that God isn't bound by. Time is like we're all…aren't we all prisoners of time? Good grief. God created time. He's not bound by His creation. That means He doesn't have to wait to find out if you're going to come to Christ or if you're going to reject Him. He doesn't have to wait. He already knew. He knew before you were born what you were going to do.

So therefore, those whom He foreknew. He predestined. That means even before you were born, He considered you a child of God, because He knew that you were going to come to Him by faith and receive what His son did on the cross for your sins. He knew. And those whom He foreknew Paul said, "[30]*...he predestined...*" Right?

You see this idea that God chooses some to be saved and some to be lost is not what the Apostle Paul is saying. That's not the point of what he's saying. It's not the message that he's giving. You need to understand something about predestination. Predestination is real. You were predestined, but you were predestined according to God's foreknowledge. And predestination is God's way of looking at your salvation from his perspective of eternity.

When God looks at your salvation, He doesn't say,

"Well, there was a day and a time when they came to know me."

It's all been done. It's a done deal. It was a done deal before you were born. You and I, we look at our salvation on a more, on a limited, finite scale. Many of you can tell me the day you accepted Jesus as your savior.

Some of you can't, don't let that weird you out if you can't, because frankly, neither can I. All we have to know is that we're saved right now. That's the only important thing, right? I don't know the day or the hour. Some of you do, but you know, that day or the hour thing that's your salvation from your perspective.

I know within a 10-year period when I came to Christ. That's as close as I can get, but that's even a very finite period, for God. He doesn't think of it that way. He doesn't…He says,

"No, I knew. I always knew that you'd come, so I predestined you."

But see, predestination is not the same as predetermination. God didn't force any of us to come to Christ, okay. His foreknowledge does not dictate our choices. He gave us free will and it pleased Him to give us free will. It is what is the…I believe free will, frankly, is one of the biggest definitions of what it means to be made in the image of God. That when God says we were created in his image, it doesn't mean you look like Him.

It means He gave you things. He communicated things to you. From His very own nature, we call those communicable attributes. That are yours and yours uniquely as a human being. Your dog does not have that communicable attribute from God to make rational, reasonable choices of the will. Your dog, and your cat, and your horse can't do those things. You can because you were created in the image of God.

So, what does it look like for us to talk about our salvation from our perspective? Look at

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John 1:12 (ESV)
"[12]…to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,"

Now look at, this is interesting. This passage talks about salvation from our perspective. And it talks about believing and receiving, doesn't it? But you see, the passage we looked at previous to this didn't talk about salvation from our perspective. It talked about it from God's perspective, and it said, **Romans 8:29-30 (ESV paraphrased)***"Those whom God foreknew…he predestined…".* From the beginning of time, He predestined you. But that's, but you guys, you can't live in your salvation from God's perspective. It's cool that He shows you things, in His Word. It's cool that He gives you a glimpse and He says,

“You want me…you want me to show you your salvation from my view? Watch this!”

And then He starts talking about predestination. And He says,

“I knew…I knew you were going to come. I knew it all along. I had no doubt.”

And so, from the very beginning of time, you've been glorified. Wow! But see that's His perspective. I can't live there because I don't have that eternal perspective all the time. He gives me glimpses of it, but I can't hang onto it very long. What I can hang onto is, yeah, probably in a 10-year period of my life, somewhere in that 10-year period, I believed and received, that's my perspective, right.

So when people ask me...and so it is funny, so we're talking about election and we're talking about free will. We're talking about choice. We're talking about God choosing you, and we're talking about you choosing God. And people say to me,

“Well, Pastor Paul, which is it? Which is it?”

And I go, “Yes, it's both.”

God reveals both. You've been chosen and you chose Him. And we've seen passages that reflect both of those realities. But I need you to know something. There are people in the body of Christ who say,

“That can't be. It's not possible. You're either chosen or you chose God, one of the two.”

And they point to…they like to point to passages that deal all with salvation from God's perspective and they say,

“See, it's all about what He did.”

But they don't quote the ones that talk about your responsibility or salvation from your perspective. It's both. And so somebody says to me,

“Well, pastor Paul, how can it be both?”

I don't know, because you're dealing with an infinite God who's all powerful and who can see things before they happen and knows that for Him, it's a done deal. I mean, that's the only explanation we have.

But let me remind you, the statement in Malachi chapter 1 was meant to be a word of assurance, okay. Again, so many people look at it and they look at it as a fearful thing, but God loves to bring assurance to His children, and I don't know if you're one of those people who struggles with the assurance of your salvation. I know that there are many who do. I want to share with you one of the statements that Jesus gave that is just a lovely statement of assurance from John chapter 1. Excuse me, John chapter 6 verse 37. It says,

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John 6:37 (ESV)
"[37]All that the father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I will never cast out."

So, when I deal with people who are struggling with their assurance of salvation, I ask them this,

"Have you come to Jesus?"

And they say, "Well, yeah, I've come to the Lord."

And I say, "Do you understand that the reason you came to him is largely due to the Father?"

Jesus said, no man comes to me except the Father draws him. So, you've been drawn. And personally, I believe everybody is drawn. I don't think everybody responds to that drawing. But you've been drawn by the Father, and Jesus made a promise that if you came to Him, He'll never cast you out. So, that's a word of assurance. That's what that…and that's the reason Jesus gave it, was that we might be assured.

All right, back to Malachi verse 4. He goes on to talk about the sons of Esau who are the Edomites, and He says, even "*[4]If Edom says we are shattered, but we're going to rebuild*, (we don't care), *we'll rebuild the ruins* (and the stuff) , *the Lord of hosts says*, (yeah), *they may rebuild, but I'll just tear it down* (again), *and they will be called 'the wicked country', and 'the people with whom the Lord is angry forever'*."

Why is that? Because God simply chose to be angry at them? No, it's because they rejected the Lord. The Bible says very clearly in the New Testament that God is not willing that any should be lost, but that all would come to repentance, and that is just as true in the Old Testament as it was in the New Testament, and it is right now. God is not willing that any be lost. So why is it that God says these people are going to be called just the wicked country? They didn't want anything to do with Him.

Verse 5, "*Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, "Great is the LORD beyond the border of Israel!*". God says, one day you're going to see all these things come to play beyond your own borders, and you're going to praise the Lord because of it.

Now, as we get into verses 6 and following, the Lord is going to address the priesthood of Israel, and then later on in this letter, He's going to address the issue of the people, kind of at large. But right now He's going to deal with the leadership, and that is often the way the Lord does it. When He brings a word of indictment, He starts with those who are in positions of leadership, because you know, that's where it begins.

He says, verse 6, *"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear?"*. (In other words, where is my respect?) *says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests,* (Look at this last statement.) *who despise my name?*".

Now, that's the indictment of the Lord. The Lord is saying to the priests, you despise my name and to despise the name of the Lord it means to treat it like it is of no importance or worthless.

"**6***…but you say, 'how have we despised your name?*" (People respond with a question and He tells them. He explains what He's talking about. He says,) "**7***By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' (*They even want…they're even digging further into this thing by saying that) *the LORD's table may be despised.* (and now He explains what He means by that)".

*"**8** When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts."*. So you see what's going on is that the Lord is confronting the priesthood concerning their half-hearted service to the Lord.

And you'll have to remember now that under the Mosaic covenant there was one area where, you know, the people if they were going to approach God for forgiveness from their sins. The way they had to do that was through a sacrificial blood offering brought to the priest, and the priest would offer it for them.

Why? The writer of Hebrews tells us, (Hebrews 9:22 ESV) *"[22]…without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins*." Okay, but you'll remember also that one of the commands that God gave through Moses was that the sacrificial animal must be without blemish. You remember that? And the reason God gave that command was because that sacrificial animal was to be a foreshadowing of the sinless Messiah who would come one day and fulfill the sacrificial system by being the perfect and ultimate sacrifice for our sins.

So God said, the offering of animals must be the nothing lame, nothing sick, nothing maimed, nothing blind, right. But the priests were doing just that. They were offering animals that were sick, maimed, deformed, and God said, this is an act of supreme disrespect on your part. This is disrespecting Me. It's disrespecting My name, it's dishonoring Me.

And I love what He says,

"Just try offering that to your governor. See what he tells you."

Say, "I have this…I have this blind and maimed goat. Do you want it?".

The governor would say, "No, take it away." Well, it's only a little sick.

He goes on verse 9, *"And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the LORD of hosts".* And what He's telling them there in verse 9 is that they're to repent, which means to turn away, to turn back from what they've been doing, which is, you know, offering these sick animals and so forth so that God might once again show favor and blessing.

He says in verse 10, *"Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain!"*. And this is interesting, what God is saying. I wish there was one priest among you who had the integrity to recognize what's going on and saying,

"Stop it! We can't do this anymore! We have to stop doing this! This is…this is wrong".

And who would just go up to the doors of the temple and lock them and say, "Enough!".

He says, "Oh, that there were just one person who had the zeal of God enough to say, Enough!".

He goes on here in the middle of verse 10 to say, "…*I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand."*.

And then what we go on to read is that as a prophecy that Malachi is given where He says in verse 11, "*For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations,* (That means among the Gentiles.) *and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.*"

Let me ask you a question. Has that happened yet? No, it has not. This is a prophecy of the Millennial Kingdom after the Battle of Armageddon. When Jesus comes a second time, rules and reigns upon the earth. We've seen many passages. We saw it just last week in Zechariah, how all nations are going to gather to Jerusalem to worship the glorious name of the Lord God, and they'll bring acceptable offerings. And that's what He's saying here through Malachi. There's coming a day when the whole….the listen, the Gentiles are going to do what you have refused to do.

Verse 12, *"But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised."*. They were saying it's okay if your little lamb has a broken leg and one ear missing and a gouged out eye, and he's kind of sick, that's all right. Don't worry about it. Don't worry.

What is the Lord telling here? What is the Lord…what is the overall message here about what we give to the Lord? Isn't the message essentially, give me your first and your best? I mean, that He's saying, I don't want your hand me downs. I don't want your…I want your best. And why should we give God our best? Because He's worthy. He's worthy of the best you've got. The best energy, the best time, the best things.

Let me show you a couple passages first from Exodus chapter 23 on the screen. Listen, look at this…

(Slide)

Exodus 23:19 (ESV)
"*[19]The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God...”*

That doesn't mean at the end of the harvest the fruit and the stuff that kind of got beat up and driven over by the ox cart, or maybe the ox stepped on it. We'll just bring those grapes and they're not looking too good but, No. He says the first and the best. Give the first and the best and then here's a passage from Leviticus.

(Slide)

Leviticus 22:17-22 (ESV)
“*[17] And the LORD spoke to Moses saying,[18] speak to Aaron and his sons and all the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of the House of Israel or of the sojourners in Israel presents a burnt offering as his offering, for any of their vows or freewill offerings that they offer to the LORD,[19] if it is to be accepted for you it shall be a male* (Look at this) *without blemish, of the bulls or the sheep or the goats.* (He goes on to say) *[20] you shall not offer anything that has a blemish, for it will not be acceptable for you. [21]And when anyone offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering from the herd or from the flock, to be accepted it must be perfect; there shall be no blemish in it. [22]Animals blind or disabled or mutilated or having a discharge or an itch or scabs you shall not offer to the LORD or give them to the LORD as a food offering on the altar.”*

So, was God clear about this matter? Sounds to me like He kind of lined it out for them ahead of time. They've gotten away from the word of God, haven't they? And because their hearts have, you know, become lackadaisical and casual with the things of the Lord, they've just kind of lowered the standard and so forth.

Can you imagine offering to the Lord roadkill? We know what roadkill is. It conjures up some pretty gruesome ideas. That's what…that's how the Lord saw it. That's how the Lord saw it. It was the throwaway. I'm either going to throw it away or, “Oh, I know I'll give it to God”. You know we can do this today. We can do exactly what the priests were doing back in Malachi's day, and that is offer to the Lord something other than our best.

We have kind of a system. We buy things, we use them, and then when we don't want them anymore, we put them on a yard or a garage sale, whatever you call it. And what we can sell, we get money for, and what we can't sell, we give to Goodwill, or we give to the church. You'd be shocked. You'd be shocked. How many times things come into the church and it's somebody's throwaway.

So, there's a message here for us today. God says, give me your best. I'm worthy of your best. I'm worthy of the best that you have. Now, that's something we got to think about, you know.

Verse 13 says, "*But you say, 'What a weariness this is,' and you snort at it,* (I guess that's like (snort sound) or something, right?) *says the Lord of hosts."* And you can see He's addressing the attitude. He's confronting them for their attitude. Rather than considering it a joy to serve the Lord and to do the things of the Lord, it had become a worrisome and laborious burden to the people.

"Oh, we got to do this again. We got to bring, I don't care, just bring an animal. I don't care what it looks like. I don't care. Just bring it here. We just got to get this thing done."

And we have to be careful of weariness, don't we? There, there are times that we become weary in the ministry. I've been doing this for about 40 years and I can tell you right now there have been times that I've become very weary in the ministry.

But when we become weary of the ministry, it becomes a heart issue. If I'm weary in the ministry, that's just a physical exhaustion issue, perhaps, I just need to take a vacation. Sometimes I don't know how weary I am until I get back from vacation, and I find out, people will come up to me. It inevitably happens. People will come up to me after I've taken a week or two off, and they'll go, "I can see you're rested." They can tell. People can tell.

But when we…when I…I'll just say I, okay. When I become weary of the ministry, that's a different matter altogether, and that's one I need to take to the Lord, because now that is a heart problem. A heart condition. It is not a…it's not a physical exhaustion or emotional or spiritual exhaustion issue. It is a heart matter,

And I might blame the ministry for being weary of the ministry. I might even blame the people, but it's my issue. I've lost my perspective. I've lost my perspective. And what is that perspective? It's a joy to serve the Lord. It's an honor and a privilege to serve the Lord. This is a privilege. It is a privilege. And

by when I say you serve the Lord, don't think of some ecclesiastical duty. It certainly encompasses that. But listen, you serve the Lord in your marriage. You serve the Lord in your parenting. You serve the Lord in your daily duties and it's an honor to serve the Lord. It's an honor to live for Jesus and to give Him your best.

Now He knows you need to rest. Good grief, we see it as early, in the nation of Israel. He told them, "Hey, take one day and rest and then every seven years take a year off." God knows that we need rest. He knows that we get weary, but He also knows that we can lose perspective.

All right, let's finish up here. We're in the middle of verse 13. He says, *"...you bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the* LORD. (No! Verse 14), *Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it,* (And that's a way of saying, and I'll give that to the Lord) *and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished* (instead). *For I am* (He says, I'm a great) *a great King, says the* LORD *of hosts, and my name will be feared among the (*paraphrased Gentiles*) nations."* I expected to be feared among my own people, right? And that's basically where the Lord ends here in, in chapter 1.

Can I bring this to a little bit more of…we'll finish with kind of a little bit of a New Testament perspective. Let me show you Revelation chapter 2. On the screen.

(Slide)

Revelation 2:4-5 (ESV)
It says, and this is God's letter, He says, "[4]*But I have this against you,* (Jesus, writing to the churches here in Revelation. He says,) *you have abandoned the love that you had at first.* (You lost your perspective. You lost your first love.) [5]*Remember* (He says,) *therefore from where you have fallen;* (Remember the way it was at first when you were in love with me? And He says, turn away from that.) *repent, and do the works* (paraphrased "things") *you did at first*."

Serve me like, you used to think it was a privilege and an honor to serve me. Do that again. And then look at Romans chapter 12. Paul writes and says:

(Slide)

Romans 12:9-11 (ESV)
"*[9] Let love be genuine* (not made up). *Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. [10]Love one another with* (paraphrased real, true) *brotherly affection*. *Outdo one another in showing honor. [11]Don't be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord."*

Be fervent in spirit. Boy, that's sometimes…that's hard to maintain. And if you're having trouble being fervent in spirit, maybe you need a rest. Maybe it's time to take a vacation. But that's okay. Let me just say this. The worst thing you can do is hear the message that I'm sharing with you here today and say to yourself, "You know what? He's right. I got to try harder." That's not the message I'm giving you. I'm not telling you,
"Listen, it's a privilege to serve God. Now get busy!"

That's what they used to tell you when I was a kid. "Buck up!" I used to hate that. I wanted to slug the adults that said, "Buck up!" to me, but that would've been disrespectful. But I hated hearing it, and I'm not telling you to "Buck up" what I am…It is very important that you try…I'm not telling you to try harder in the flesh to serve the Lord.

The best thing you can do is confess your lack of fire, your lack of zeal. If you've become weary, confess it to the Lord. Pray that He would infuse you with the power to live the life that you are called to live, that power to serve, that power to love, that power to be inflamed once again with the things of the Lord. And to honor the Lord in your service and in all that you do in your marriage.

"Lord, I've gotten lackadaisical in the way I treat my wife. You told me to love her as Christ loved the church, and I haven't been doing that."

God says to wives, I want you to respect your husbands and honor them in the position of headship that I gave them. And a wife might say,

"You know what? I haven't been doing that."

We've lacked our zeal in serving the Lord. It's funny, isn't it? Marriage comes down to serving the Lord. So many people tell me,

"We're having marriage problems."

“No, you're having obedience problems.”

Really, truly I mean, most of the time, that's what's going on. So come to the Lord and remember He's not expecting you to pump yourself up and try harder.

That's not what He's telling you. In fact, let me end with this passage from John chapter 15, and I love this. I have to keep going back over this as a pastor and teacher. Jesus says:

(Slide)

John 15:5 (ESV)
“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, (and here's why) *for apart from me you can do nothing.”*

Husbands, wives if you've noticed a lack in your marriage understand this, apart from Him, you can do nothing. If you have a ministry outside of marriage, maybe it's even your parenting. Remember, apart from Him, you can do nothing. In your job being the believer that has a good attitude and loves the people and doesn't speak disrespectfully about the boss. Remember, you can do nothing apart from Him, and in your ministry, in your Christian ministry of serving the Lord, whether it's teaching Sunday school, being an usher, whatever you might do, remember that apart from Him, you can do nothing. And that's where we have to…that's where we have to leave it. That's where we have to proceed from then.

Again, God isn't telling you to buck up, try harder and grit your teeth. He's saying, come to Me all you who are weary and heavy laden **(Matthew 11:28)**. I'll give you rest and then I'll give you strength. I'll give you the strength to serve Me. I'm the one who called you to serve, and I will enable you to serve. We have a saying in the Calvary Chapels, “Where God guides, God provides,” and He will provide!

Let’s pray. Father, we thank you so much for your Word tonight. Thank you for this first chapter of this wonderful book of Malachi, and we pray that you would fill us with your Spirit, Lord God, and enable us to serve you with a whole heart. And Father, we just confess to you, those of us who need to confess that our heart has been lacking. Sometimes our attitude is even lacking.

Forgive us Lord, because we sometimes try to be better in the flesh. Help us to remember that as we abide in you, abide in Your Word, abide in Your Spirit.

You're the One who gives us true fruitfulness. And help us to remember, Lord, that apart from You, we can do nothing. The flesh cannot do the work of the spiritual ministry. Thank you, Father, for these wonderful reminders. We ask you to guide and direct our hearts tonight. Through Jesus Christ our Savior, and all God's people said together, Amen. God bless.